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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with strategies for developing literacy skills in nonnative speakers of English. Discussed in the initial section of the paper are four different categories of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) adults and the basic philosophy that underlies the teaching of literacy skills to adults at all levels of literacy. The special needs of ESL students from preliterate societies and learning activities for use in addressing these special needs are examined. Described next are a series of strategies focusing on meaning that can be used successfully with students who are not themselves literate but who speak a language that has a common written form. A series of activities focusing on patterns are provided for use with ESL students who are well educated in their first language. Concluding the paper are sample lessons from a refugee camp in Southeast Asia and from an adult education center in San Francisco. (MN)

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TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING LITERACY SKILLS IN NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

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for
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The intent of this paper is to focus on successful teaching strategies for developing literacy skills in non-native speakers of English. For purposes of this paper, we will define the goal of ESL literacy as the development of those literacy skills which will enable effective participation in a regular ESL program (ACSA/ESL Staff Development Project, 1981, p.1). We will define literacy students as ones who are not able to make normal progress in an ESL instructional setting, due to difficulty in dealing with written language (Strauch, p.1)

Four different categories of ESL adults (LORC, p.24-25, ACSA/ESL, 1981, p.2) are in need of literacy training:

(1) preliterate - those who speak a language for which there is no written form or whose written form is rare (e.g., Hmong, Mien)

(2) illiterate - those who speak a language for which there is a written form which is common but who do not read or write themselves (e.g., Hispanic)

(3) semiliterate - those who have had some formal education or are able to read and write at an elementary level

(4) non-Roman alphabetic - those who are literate in their first language but need to learn the formation of the Roman alphabet and the sound/symbol relationships of English (e.g., Arabic, Cambodian, Cantonese, Farsi, Korean, Thai)

The need for classes that focus on ESL literacy has grown in proportion to the number of immigrants and refugees whose written language is non-alphabetic and whose spoken language has had no written form.

No matter which of these four groups an adult ESL instructor is working with, there is consensus on five specific points in the underlying philosophy:

one: oral work precedes the reading and writing

two: success in the early stages is important

three: content must be relevant to the students

four: lessons should be short, preferably self-contained

five: each teaching focus requires a variety of approaches (in order to assure sufficient exposure without danger of boredom)

Strategies we have identified fall into three distinct categories: synthetic (focus on patterns), analytic (focus on meaning), and pre-reading. Initially, literacy instruction for ESL students tended to be synthetic -- focusing on parts to form wholes (Strauch, p.3). By the mid-seventies, when the field was beginning to be impacted by Frank Smith's Understanding Reading, emphasis on meaning resulted in a more analytic approach (Strauch, p.7; Wigfield, 1976-77, p.7; Woodsworth, p.17). In the late seventies, as adult classrooms were impacted by a new type of refugee, it became necessary to teach a new set of skills -- called prereading (LORC, p. 4).

The historical progression was patterns, meaning, prereading; however, the teaching progression is prereading, meaning, patterns. Therefore, we will present the successful strategies we have identified in teaching order.

Current practitioners have successfully blended the three approaches into their classroom strategies. The paper concludes with a description of such lessons.

PREREADING

Prereading skills are necessary for literacy students who have had no experience with a writing system, or for whom a writing system is a relatively new phenomenon, such as the Hmong and Mien. These skills may also be necessary for students whose own writing system is considerably different from the English system -- such as a right to left movement rather than our left to right movement.

Introducing the concept that things can be symbolized through writing is one objective of prereading activities. Instructors working with students who have had no exposure to literacy find it necessary to introduce concrete items prior to any visual representation.*

Activities begin by working with real objects, then linking real objects to pictures, preferably photographs which are less abstract then drawings (San Francisco Community College Centers, p.3) Both of these steps precede the introduction of written symbols. An example of this progression is working with a real dollar, linking it to a photograph of a dollar, and then a drawing of a dollar, before introducing the symbol $ for dollar or the written word dollar.

Another objective of prereading activities is to develop visual discrimination skills. These activities require students to match shapes, to differentiate shapes and to sequence. Activities designed to develop these skills usually require students to respond physically, such as by circling,

*Literacy students often recognize items by factors such as weight or texture, which are lost in representations such as play money, plastic fruit or flashcards.

checking or underlining symbols that are the same or by crossing out symbols that are different. The usual progression is to begin with shapes and then progress to letters. Provided with worksheets of shapes such as triangles, circles, and squares, the student is expected to cross out the shape that is different in each line.

DIRECTIONS: Put an X on the shape that is not the same in each sentence.

Haverson and Haynes, Prereading Learner Worksheets, p. 1

After presenting exercises that focus on discriminating shapes but before discriminating letters, some instructors present lines that build towards letter formation; that is, straight lines in vertical and horizontal positions and curved lines, with the curve upward, downward, to the left or to the right.

Mrowicki, Literacy Workbook, p. 1

In addition to building the skill of discrimination between shapes, these activities are designed so that students are "reading" from left to right and from top to bottom (LORC, p.29).

After distinguishing shapes, the next stage is to distinguish letters. Students are usually first asked to indicate which letter is not the same.

DIRECTIONS: Circle the shape that is not the same in the sentence.

1.

Λ A Λ Λ

1 2 3 4

2.

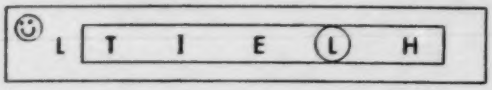
C C G C

1 2 3 4

Language and Orientation Resource Center, p. 34

Next, students are asked to indicate which are the same as the first.

DIRECTIONS: CIRCLE THE LETTER THAT IS THE SAME.



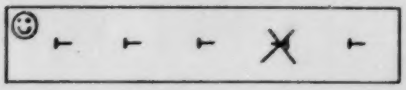
1. Z X K Z Y A

2. I I L F H T

Longfield, Student Workbook, p. 15

An item may use all the same letter but include one that is in a different direction such as all E's, but one pointing left instead of right, or all Y's, but one upside down.

DIRECTIONS: PUT AN X ON THE SHAPE THAT IS DIFFERENT.



1. E E Ǝ E E

2. Ɔ C C C C

Longfield, Student Workbook, p. 12

Letters may also be mixed, such as mostly O's, but one D; or mostly D's, but one B.

DIRECTIONS: Circle the shape that is not the same in the sentence.

1.

O O O C

1 2 3 4

2.

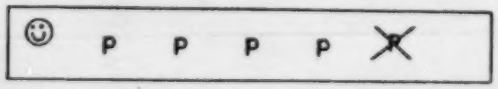
d O O O

1 2 3 4

Language and Orientation Resource Center, p. 35

Another way of mixing is mostly small leters but one capital or mostly capital letters but one small.

DIRECTIONS: PUT AN X ON THE LETTER THAT IS DIFFERENT.



1. y Y y y y

2. C c c c c

Longfield, Student Workbook, p. 14

One bridge between activities for preliterates and for other literacy students is identifying groups of letters which are the same.

CIRCLE POST.

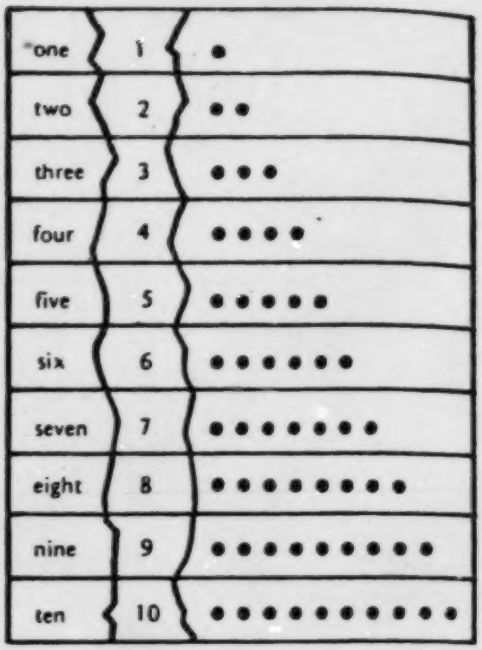
POST	STOP	SPOT	POST
POTS	STOP	POST	POST

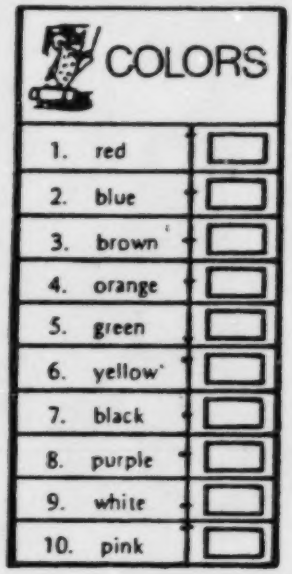
UNDERLINE OFFICE.

OFFICE	OFF	OFFER	OFFICE
OFFICE	OFFER	OFFICE	OFFICE

Mrowicki, Literacy Workbook 1, p. 101

Another bridge is the matching of print with visuals representing concepts. Lewis suggests these activities begin with aids that are clues to the correct answer. The most commonly used aid is jagged lines as in puzzles (see Figure 1 below). Notches are also used (see figure 2 below).





Lewis, pp 114-115

The progression Lewis suggests for matching print with concepts is: (1) matching concept and print with the use of aids; (2) matching concept and print without the use of aids; and (3) completing a task which requires reading the print without the concept such as matching the numeral 1 and the word one or responding to a printed word such as red by filling in a space with that color (Lewis, p.114-116).

Students at the prereading stage learn to match shapes, differentiate shapes, sequence left to right, and sometimes even hold the pencil correctly (LORC, p.4). Prereading activities recognize that some students need to de-

velop visual discrimination and patterning skills as well as the concept that things can be symbolized. Before preliterate students can handle a "typical" ESL workbook with such basic activities as circling the printed word that is the name of an item pictured, they require such prereading instruction.

MEANING

Many students who are not literate themselves speak a language which has a common written form. These students -- from cultures such as Hispanic and Arabic -- differ from the preliterate because they have experienced living in a literate society; the concept that things can be symbolized through writing is not new to them. They do not need instruction in the prereading stage. However, they themselves have not been functioning literates in their own society. Previous literacy experiences have probably not been positive ones. For these students activities which focus on meaning are effective. The content arises from interest, personal experiences or need. A context is provided from which words for reading purposes can be drawn.

In ESL literacy instruction, strategies which focus on meaning are used at the word level, at the phrase and sentence level, and beyond the sentence level.

Strategies which focus on single words include teaching sight words, eliciting word associations through opposite or categorizing activities, and having students match pictures to words.

The presentation of sight words is preceded by aural/oral practice in a context, often dialogue which is accompanied by realia or visuals so that meaning is clear. The most common source of sight words is the class text. Haverson and Haynes begin the sight word presentation by showing a card with the words in the sentence that has been practiced. At the same

time that card is shown, students listen to, then repeat, the words on the card. Next the instructor points to each word, says "this is the word '_____' "and tells students "Please read this word." Longfield suggests that students use 3 x 5 cards to make flashcards of sight words from their text. These cards are then used for individual work and pair work activities such as the following:

(1) one student reads a sight word and the other student locates it from his set

(2) one student reads a sight word and the other student spells or writes it

(3) one student spells a sight word orally or holds it up and the other student identifies it

Longfield, Instructor's Guide, p.8

A second source of sight words is the students themselves. In this situation each individual may have a different list of words. One approach to this is student-made dictionaries for students to keep their own personal record. For this activity students write a title "My Dictionary" on a spiral notebook and write a letter of the alphabet at the top of each page. Separate pages may be included for "sh", "ch", "th", and "wh". As students learn new vocabulary words, they add them to the appropriate page of their dictionary (Neighborhood Centers, p. 58). Some instructors have students draw pictures that illustrate the word. Others provide them with a picture.

After students have learned several sight words, activities which elicit word associations can be incorporated into lessons. Orem argues that word association activities develop the ability of students to think paradigmatically, which, he maintains, plays an important role in the transference of the oral code to the written code (Orem, p. 108-9). One type of word association activity is "Opposites." A word is listed and blanks are put beside it

to suggest its opposite: For example:

NO ___	DOWN __	WRONG _____
GO ____	OUT __	DAY _____

Batchelor et al, p. 162

The word to be elicited from the students is the one in the lesson. The word listed may not be. For example, in a lesson about cable cars, the sentence "Cable cars are noisy" appears. In the opposites drill, the word listed is "QUIETLY". Wigfield suggests the American Heritage Word Frequency rank list as a source (Wigfield 1976-77, p.13).

Another type of word association activity is categorizing words into groups such as food, color, furniture (Longfield, Instructor's Guide p.9).

In addition to sight words and word associations, matching words and pictures is another activity which involves meaning at the word level. There are several different approaches to such matching activities.

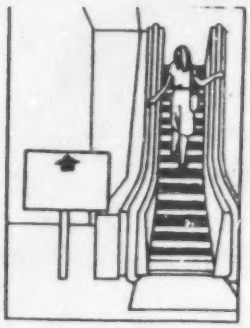
1) Students match the printed word and picture or printed symbol and pictures.

NO LEFT TURN.

NO RIGHT TURN.

Mrowicki, Literacy Workbook 1, p. 80

2) Students practice printing the word that means the same as the picture.



READ. TRACE. COPY.

UP

UP

UP

_____

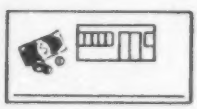
NUMBER OF LETTERS ___

Mrowicki, Literary Workbook, p. 95

3) Students choose from two or more words the one which relates to the meaning of the picture.

READ. CIRCLE THE CORRECT WORDS.

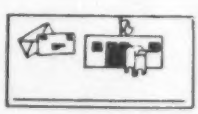
1



BANK
SCHOOL

HOSPITAL
SCHOOL

3



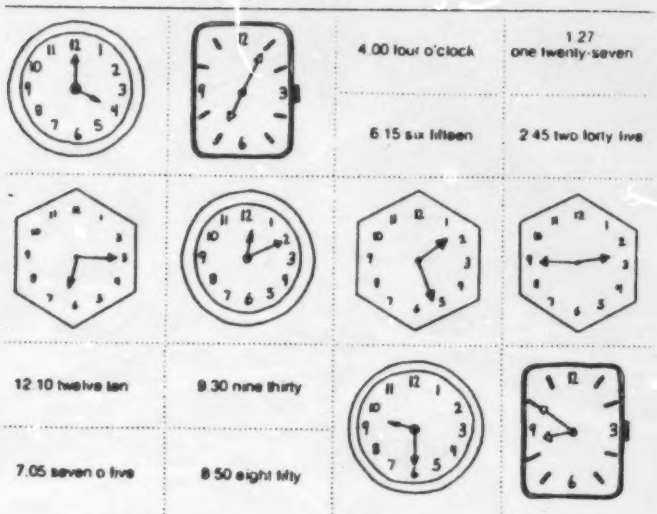
POST OFFICE
SCHOOL

Mrowicki, Literary Workbook, p. 95

$.60
$.85

Center for Applied Linguistics, p. 98

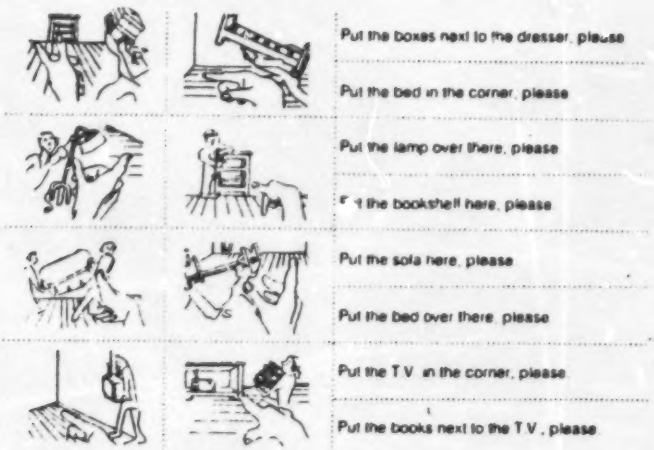
Another, more game-like approach to matching activities is Concentration. Each student has a deck of cards. The deck consists of pictures and a word for each.



Foley and Pomann, p. 39

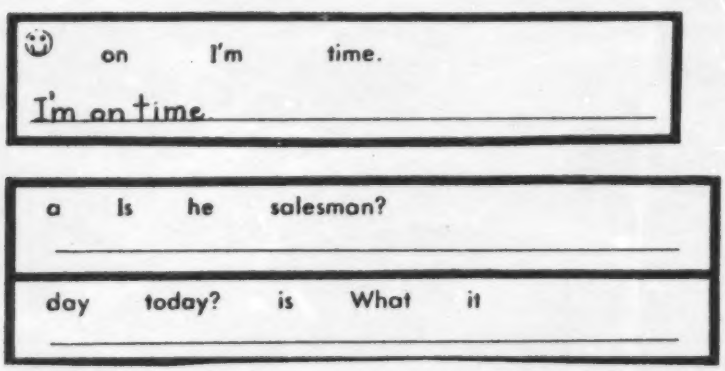
Cards are shuffled and placed in two stacks (one stack for pictures and one stack for words). The first player turns up a picture card and says the word for it. S/he then turns up a word card, trying to match the picture. If the cards match, s/he keeps them. If not, both are returned to their decks face down and the next student takes a turn. Play continues until all cards are matched (Foley and Pomann, p.vi).

The strategy of matching pictures to words is also used at the phrase and senterce level.


Put the boxes next to the dresser, please
Put the bed in the corner, please
Put the lamp over there, please
Put the bookshelf here, please
Put the sofa here, please
Put the bed over there, please
Put the T.V. in the corner, please
Put the books next to the T.V., please

Foley and Pomann, p. 69

Another sentence level strategy is scrambled words, which students rearrange to form a sentence. Semiliterates may be presented with a worksheet that requires rewriting.



Longfield, Student Workbook, p. 132

For preliterate students a "sentence strips" exercise is an alternative to the scrambled sentences. Separate word slips from materials on which students have already had listening and speaking practice can be provided students, who then arrange the word slips into sentences (Haverson and Haynes). Foley and Pomann actually provide materials to be torn out of the text and cut apart for this kind of activity.

Excuse me. Do you have change of a dollar? Sure.

Foley and Pomann, p. 29

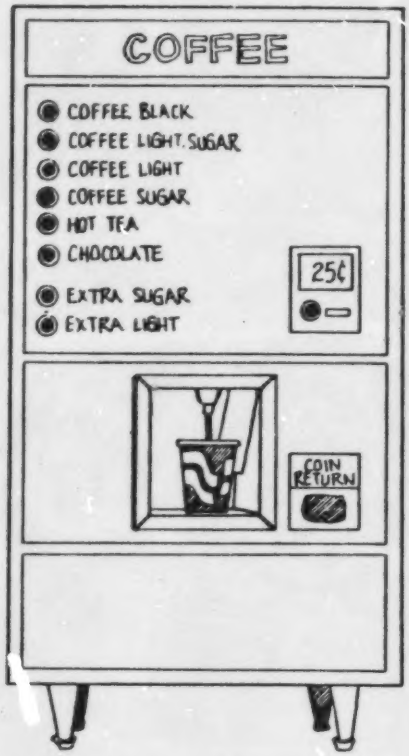
Developing student skills in recognizing sight words, making word associations, matching pictures and words, and arranging words to form sentences are steps towards the goal of deciphering print. However, instruction must also include activities which focus on meaning beyond the sentence level.

One instructional strategy at the paragraph level -- similar to scrambled sentences and sentence strips -- is the sequencing of pictures or sentences to form paragraphs.

An example provided by Ranard is a series of six pictures which illustrate a man's daily routine: the man, the man getting up, going into the bathroom, eating breakfast, going to work, getting on a bus. The difference between this and the language experience approach described below is that the instructor describes each picture himself rather than elicits the description from the students. Literacy activities suggested by Ranard to accompany the story include rearranging the scrambled pictures into the "correct" order, matching a picture with an oral sentence they hear; matching a written sentence with a picture; arranging written sentences into correct order; filling in the blanks on a handout of the story in paragraph form, and finally copying the story from the chalkboard (Ranard, p. 21-22).

Another instructional strategy which focuses on meaning beyond the sentence level is total physical response (TPR) exercises. The premise of TPR is that speaking should be delayed until comprehension is internalized. In TPR activities students are expected to respond physically to an oral stimulus, usually

a series of commands for a specific situation such as brushing your teeth, washing your hands. Keltner et al suggest such an activity as a daily warmup in literacy classes. Mrowicki applies this technique to the use of vending machines, providing the students with a visual of the machine.

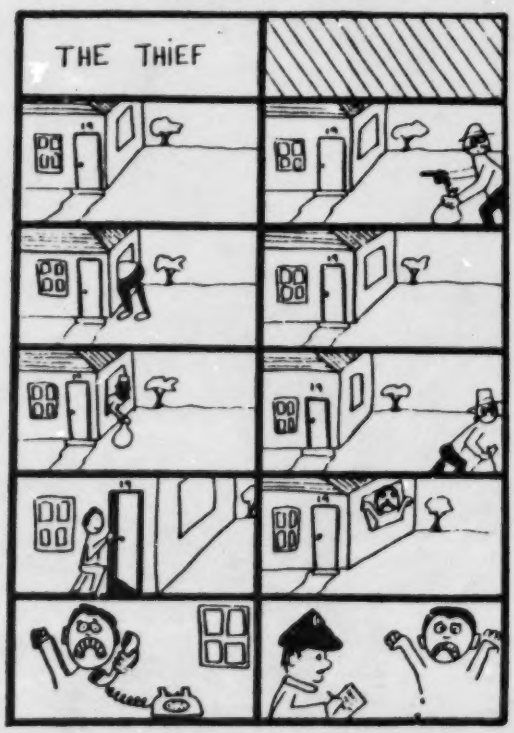


Put 25c. in the slot.
Choose your drink.
Press the right button.
Wait a minute.
Take out the cup.

Mrowicki. Student's Workbook, p. 74

Instructors of pre-literate students have adapted the TPR technique to develop letter and word recognition skills: "Show me the letter 'm'" (Haverson and Haynes). One commercial text is designed entirely around listening activities. Students are required first to circle what they hear and then to write what they hear (Boyd and Boyd). The approach has even impacted testing. Told to "spell your name", students taking the HELP test have access to alphabet chips. No oral language is required (Henderson and Moriarity).

Another strategy -- the Language Experience Approach (LEA) -- differs significantly from the series of commands in TPR and from the sequencing of pictures or sentences as suggested by Ranard because of the source of meaning. LEA uses the student's ideas and the student's language in the preparation of beginning reading materials. The student decides what s/he wants to say, how s/he wants to say it, and then dictates to the teacher, who acts as a scribe. Rigg suggests one way to start an LEA story is with a wordless picture book. Students "read" the story by looking at the pictures: the teacher elicits a discussion to reach consensus on basic plot line and character development. Once consensus is reached, s/he records the story. After each sentence, what has been written is read aloud. Rigg warns that a teacher using this technique should write what the students say, not what s/he wants the students to say (focus is on meaning, not form). Several ESL texts, including those my Mrowicki and Ligon, provide picture sequences such as the following which lend themselves to the language experience approach.



Ligon, English is ~~XXX too~~ Deep, p. 81

Once a story has been elicited and placed on the chalkboard, activities such as the following can be used to develop reading skills:

1) match a word card to duplicate word in sentence

2) read sentence containing matched words

3) read word cards in isolation

4) read sentence orally (without word cards)

5) arrange word cards into sentence

6) read sentence made up of word cards

7) read entire story without help.

When students copy stories and keep them in their own notebook, they can reread previous stories. At this stage, they may selfcorrect their stories. Rigg provides an example:

> "Two ladies are playing in tennis. In the hand they are holding the rackets. One from they is running to ball."

A month later, the same student dictated this (the self-corrections were made two weeks after that:

> "The boy lives on the ranch. He helps his parents. He gives the food for the cocks....The cows eats the grass and he watches them."

Rigg, p. 8

Rigg says LEA works because "anyone can read what she has just said."

A final activity which focuses on meaning at the discourse level is "cloze" exercises. The objective of cloze is to develop the students ability to predict, to get meaning from context, and to focus on the whole passage rather than isolated segments (ACSA ESL Staff Development Project, 1983, p. 60). These exercises delete every nth word (every 7th, 8th, 9th). Wigfield provides a cloze near

the end of most of his lessons, using the same subject matter as the lesson and repeating grammar and vocabulary as much as possible:

READ

TV

I like TV. I like to watch TV.
I like to watch TV a lot. I watch TV in the morning. I watch TV in the afternoon. I watch TV at night.
Do you like to watch TV?

READ AND WRITE

TV

TV, TV, TV. PEOPLE WATCH TV A LOT. _____ WATCH TV IN THE MORNING. THEY WATCH TV _____ AFTERNOON. THEY WATCH TV AT NIGHT. PEOPLE _____ TV TOO MUCH.

Wigfield, 1982, p. 2

Wigfield maintains that a student's ability to cloze a passage is evidence of his independence in reading. It is this independence in reading that is the ultimate goal of literacy instruction. Each of the activities mentioned in this section -- recognizing sight words, making word associations, matching print with visuals, putting words into sentences, sequencing pictures to recreate stories, responding physically to commands which incorporate print in some way- is a building block to reading a passage such as a language experience story and to being able to "cloze" a passage.

PATTERNS

In addition to preliterate and non- or semiliterate students, literacy classes may have students who are well-educated in their first language, usually a language which does not use the Roman alphabet. These students enter class with the concept that things can be symbolized through writing; they also enter having already had one successful experience at becoming literate. For these students, activities to develop literacy skills may focus on patterns, assuming that they can recognize and produce the sounds presented in the patterns.

Patterns surface in literacy instruction in several ways: through phonics; through carefully controlled and sequenced presentation of syllables or structures; and through the grouping of letters and numbers to teach writing.

The phonics approach stresses regularities in sound/symbol correspondence. Units of instruction include initial consonants, final consonants, consonant-vowel-consonant patterns ("long" vowels as in "cape", "hope", "site"); consonant blends (cl, pl, bl, fl; fr, br, gr, tr, dr; st, tw, sl, str, sch); consonant digraphs (sh, ch, th, wh); and alternative spellings of "long" vowels (eg., "ai" and "ay" for /a/; "ea" and "ee" for /e/; "igh" for /i/; "oa" for /o/ and "oo" for /u/.

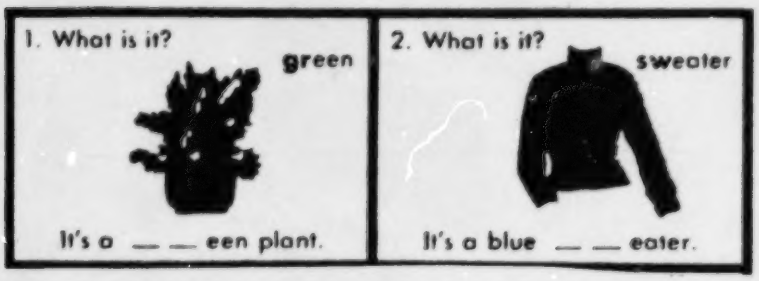
There are a number of activities which use the phonics approach. One focuses on the first sound of a word that is pictured. A technique used for native language literacy, it has often been criticized by adult ESL teachers because the words pictured are not relevant to their adult students, or because they have not been preceded by aural/oral exercises with the words in context. However, there are three sets of commercially available materials designed for ESL adults which have incorporated this strategy.

Two sets, one by Longfield and one by Haverson and Haynes, have incorporated activities based on the phonics approach into their literacy components. Both sets are a literacy supplement to Iwataki, a series based on the aural/oral approach. Therefore, when the literacy materials are used in conjunction with the original text, work with words in the phonics activities has been preceeded by aural/oral practice in a context.

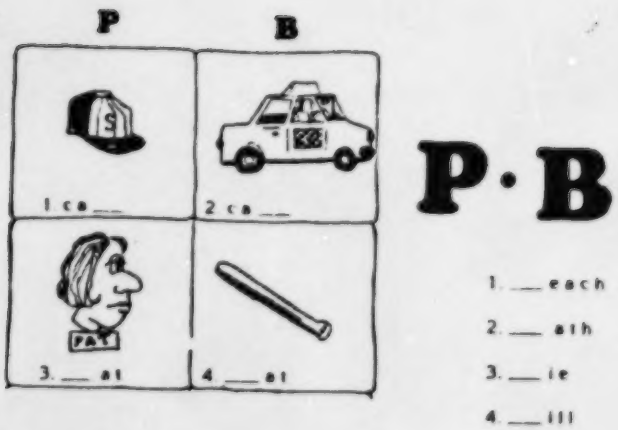
A third set, by Bassano, consists of two phonics workbooks, one for consonants and one for vowels. Though the vocabulary presented is not contextualized, each word is accompanied by an illustration and the author's intent was to use vocabulary meaningful to her adult students. Most instructors use the Bassano materials as a supplement to other materials.

All three sets of materials provide listening and speaking activities before students are expected to write. When students do write, production of a single letter precedes writing a whole word. Stimulus for writing the letter may be by a visual or by dictation.

DIRECTIONS: READ AND WRITE.



Longfield, Student Workbook, p. 65



Bassano, Consonants Sound Easy, p. 13

Activities which have developed with focusing on the first sound include the following:

1) listing words which begin or end with the same sound, eliciting from students the name of the sound and other words that begin with that sound.
2) listing words with the same initial or final sound but including one with a different sound and having students indicate (e.g., by raising a hand) when they hear a different sound.
3) pronouncing a word and having students give the first letter of the word.
4) having students scan a list of words and circle that portion of each word which has the symbol for the sound being taught.

Because of the assumption that literacy in ESL is preceded by aural/oral exercises, the sequencing of the literacy curriculum is usually determined by the aural/oral exercises. However, Haverson and Haynes sequence their presentation of initial consonants for reading purposes according to language production consistency in initial position. They present the following sequence:

group 1: M, S, A, D, F, T,

group 2: P, N, I, L, B, Z, C

group 3: G, H, E, J, R, V

group 4: K, W, U, Y, Z, O, X

A second activity based on the phonics approach has grown out of a system developed by Gattegno. Gattegno developed the system because so many letters (graphemes) in English may have more that one sound (phoneme). For example, the letter "s" may sound like /sh/ as in "mission", and "sugar"; it may sound

like /z/ as in "is", "boy" and "scissors"; and of course it also may sound like /s/ as in "sit" (Hatch, p. 130). Gattegno assigned a color to each sound with all its variant spellings. His system involves the teacher -- and later, students -- tapping out words by pointing to the appropriate symbol on the color chart (Scott, p. 22; Strauch, p. 9; McGee and Jibodh, p.1).

An adaptation of this system involves the teacher tapping out words from black and white letters rather than the color-coded ones proposed by Gattegno. The teacher places letters on the chalkboard:

a

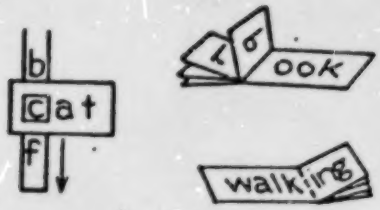
p t s m

By pointing to the letters above, one can tap out a number of words ("pat", "sat", "mat", "tap", "sap", "map", "pam" and "sam"). First the teacher taps out a word and students respond. The teacher may also tap out a word, have one student write the word on the chalkboard, and have the other students read it. Or, the teacher may read a word, have students spell it, and have one student tap it out (McGee and Jibodh, p. 2). The teacher may also tap it out and have all students write it (a "silent" dictation).

A third activity based on sound/spelling correspondence exercises involves changing letters. For example, begin with the word "not". Have students read the word. Erase the "n" and write "p" in its place, producing "pot". Have students read this word (Wigfield, 1982, p. xiv). Wigfield provides lists of words grouped by spelling paterns which he finds useful for this kind of exercise (pages 173-180).

A fourth strategy based on the phonics approach is the phonogram -- a succession of letters that occur in many words with the same phonetic value (e.g., "ight" in "bright", "fight", "flight", "light". The instructor starts with a word already in the student's sight vocabulary, such as

"clock". Then s/he has students identify the letters that sound like /ock/ and then the letters that sound like /cl/. Next s/he has students read the word parts and then the whole word. finally, s/he repeats the process with other words containing /ock/ such as "block", "smock", "locker" (Oakland Neighborhood Centers, p. 57). Pull charts and flip charts, as illustrated below, lend themselves to this approach.



Hatch, p. 133

Another approach which stresses patterns is based on syllables. In the syllabary approach, the syllable is the reading unit. This approach begins with a "rebus" -- that is, a picture of an object whose name resembles the syllable. After some fifteen syllables have been taught, students read and write sentences by placing word cards in rows (Hatch, p. 131-133). A variation of the rebus can be used to elicit writing:

(Foo Hin) is sitting in his

Oakland Neighborhood Centers, p. 56

The rebus portion of the syllable approach is not widespread in ESL, but the following activities suggested by McGee and Jibodh, which are based on syllables, are:

1) cover words on the chalkboard and read each syllable by syllable
2) read words from a list and have students hold up the number of fingers that tell the number of syllables.
3) provide students with a list of words and have them divide each word into syllables and write down the number of syllables.
4) provide students with a worksheet divided into three columns: in the first column provide a list of words, in the second column have students indicate the number of vowels, and in the third column the number of syllables.

A final area in which we will discuss patterns is in teaching writing.

Practitioners whose students begin reading instruction at the pattern state tend to gloss over instruction in writing. The issues of print (BLOCK and manuscript) versus writing (cursive and baroque capitals) do not come up; neither does the sequencing of letter formation based on distinctive features. One may assume, therefore, that the majority of literacy students in classes which use the pattern approach in isolation are already familiar with the Roman alphabet and most often from linguistic groups which use it.

Practitioners whose students must begin prereading activities tend to use patterns in determining grouping of numbers and letters to teach writing. Haverson has divided numbers into three groups based on stroke:

group one: the numbers "1", "4" and "7"

group two: the numbers "0", "6", "8" and "9"

group three: the numbers "3", "2" and "5"

LORC. pp 44-50

In teaching letters, Rutledge also argues for grouping according to letter formation rather than in alphabetical order (p. 56). In either block or cursive, practitioners advocate working on individual letters which have similar distinctive features. In printing lower case letters, the following groups are used:

round letters: such as o, c, a

half space letters: such as i, e,

full space letters: such as l, t,

tail letters: such as p, q, y

McGee and Jibodh, p. 10

For block letters Wigfield proposes the following groups:

B, P, R, D
M, N, W, V
L, T, F, E, H, I
Y, K, X, Z, A
O, Q, U, C, G, J, S

Wigfield, 1976-77, p. 12

This third set of strategies -- using patterns to present a system for literacy students -- reaches different literacy students in different ways. Patterns used to group numbers and letters in teaching writing are effective with preliterate students. Patterns used to develop sound/symbol correspondence are effective with students whose first language uses the same writing system as English (the Roman alphabet), but a different sound system from English. Finally, patterns used to focus on syllables are effective with students whose first language does not use a syllabic writing system.

The second set of strategies -- using meaning to provide motivation and relevance -- is especially effective with illiterate and semiliterate students, who have not yet achieved success at becoming literate in their first language. Recognizing sight words from conversations they've just practiced, responding to a set of printed commands they've learned aurally, and reading language experience stories they have just told their instructor are immediate rewards.

The first set of strategies -- prereading activities to develop sensory motor skills and movement from real objects to pictures to written symbols -- are essential for preliterate students to succeed with the other two types of activities.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in our introduction, current practitioners who are successful ESL literacy instructors have blended the three approaches into their classroom strategies. We will conclude the paper with two sample lessons that illustrate this: one from a refugee camp in souteast asia and one from an adult educaton center in San Francisco.

The first example is from the refugee camp. The objective of the lesson was for students to be able to answer job interview questions about previous work experience and to complete job application forms. Activities broke down as follows:

Activity one: conversation

What was your job in _____?
(name of country)

I was a _____.
(name of occupation)

Activity two:

matching visual of own occupation with printed word

joined together like a jigsaw

Activity three:

finding printed word for own occupation with no visual clue.

Activity four:

arranging letters of the alphabet to form the word for own occupation

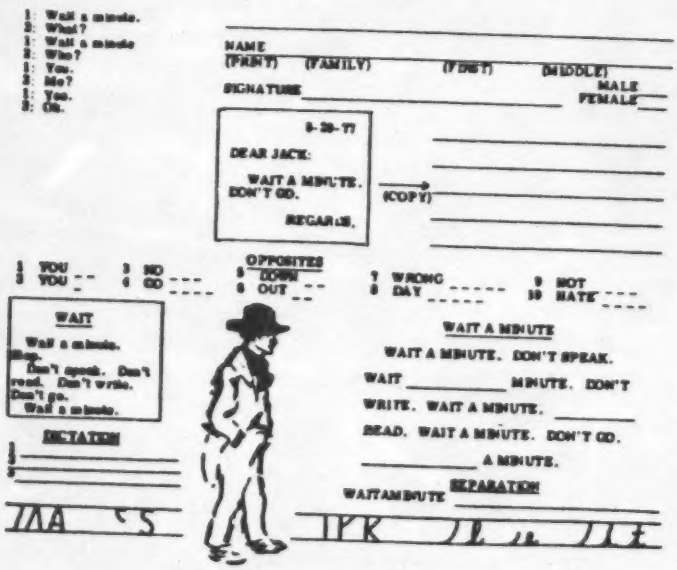
Activity five:

finding word for own occupation from among several and filling in the missing letter(s)

Activity six:

copying the whole word for own occupation

The second example is from the adult education center in San Francisco (Wigfield, 1978, p. 162).



Wigfield, 1978, p. 162

Each of these lessons has followed a traditional ESL progression -- first listening, then speaking, next reading, and finally writing. Each has made a .

distinction between reading (recognition items) and writing (production items).* Each has limited its goal sufficiently to assure success, while at the same time focusing on something relevant to the students. Each lesson is self-contained and has incorporated a variety of activities. And neither has used a textbook.

The use of textbooks is one of the major differences between an ESL literacy class and an "ordinary" ESL class. For literate ESL students, textbooks are an aid to memory. For the nonliterate, traditional texts have been one more obstacle to overcoming the problem of learning English. Unfortunately, textbooks are one way instructors are able to keep up with new methods. Because the need for literacy instruction to ESL students has increased considerably in recent years, new methodology is continually developing. Presently, there is no vehicle to facilitate the crossfertilization of these new ideas and techniques or to facilitate their dissemination across the nation.

*In some competencies, the items for reading and writing are different. For example, to "complete forms" students must read -- but not write -- the word "NAME; they need to write only their name. To recognize signs (e.g., restroom signs "MEN" and "WOMEN", crosswalk signs "WALK" and "DON'T WALK", students do not need to write any of the words; in fact, in some instances what they need to read is not words but visuals (for restroom signs and or the colors green and red for crosswalk signs).

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